Early promotional materials for the two largest railroad companies to build west across Kansas:
the Kansas Pacific (initially the Union Pacific, Eastern Division) and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe.

The "Missing" Railroad Towns Along the Union Pacific and the Santa Fe Lines in Kansas

by James R. Shortridge

F ew subjects have interested scholars of the nineteenth-century Plains more than railroads. Although some of this attention derives from nostalgia for the brawny, idiosyncratic steam locomotives of that period, most of the literature has deeper, easily justified roots. Unlike the experience in the eastern United States where tracks were laid across a landscape of previously established cities, early railroad officials in the Great Plains built ahead of settlement. Usually armed with generous land grants, they were empowered to create an entire urban system.

Although the ultimate destinations of the West's pioneering railroads normally were common knowledge, only senior company officials knew the exact paths that the tracks would follow. These people therefore could plat townsites wherever they wished. They also could determine locations to join branch lines with the main trunk and to establish various division headquarters (needed every hundred miles or so in the age of steam), major repair shops, stockyards, and other facilities. By so doing, and by simultaneously

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inviting rich friends to invest in selected townsite companies as a means to increase capital, they could effectively determine which new communities would grow into substantial cities and which would remain small, grain-shipping hamlets.[1]

The results of the nearly omnipotent authority of early railroad men remain easily visible today. Officials from the Burlington and Missouri River Company forced an arbitrary, alphabetical sequence of names across southern Nebraska: Crete, Dorchester, Exeter, Fairmont, Grafton, Harvard, Inland, Juniata, Kenesaw, and Lowell. Grenville Dodge, who directed townsite operations at various times for the Fort Worth and Denver City Railroad, the Texas and Pacific, and the Union Pacific across Wyoming, is largely responsible for the early growth of Cheyenne, Laramie, Midland, and Odessa. And nearly the entire urban geography of North Dakota can be explained by the regular spacing of division points along the Great Northern (Grand Forks, Devils Lake, Minot, Williston) and the Northern Pacific (Fargo, Jamestown, Bismarck, Dickinson).[2]

Armed with such knowledge about city creation on the Plains in general, the expectations for Kansas can be easily stated. Two major railroad companies built west across the state in the 1860s and early 1870s: the Eastern Division of the Union Pacific from the Kansas City area, and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe from Topeka. In their eastern sections, company officials negotiated alternate routeways with the businessmen in existing towns such as Burlingame, Emporia, Lawrence, and Manhattan. They were after local assistance in the form of bond issues, rights-of-way, and other concessions. West of the Flint Hills, however, as these two lines passed beyond the populated frontier, the economic strategies became very different. With a land grant of 2,944,788 acres in the case of the Santa Fe and an even more generous 3,925,791 acres for the Union Pacific, a small group of men could play kingmaker for town planning across 70 percent of the state. Surely they would establish all the key cities, and their several di-

vision headquarters would come to be the major urban centers in that vast region.[3]

The reality for central and western Kansas, as this article's title suggests, was and is something quite different from the standard model. Union Pacific people established only four towns along their entire three-hundred-mile pathway across that portion of the state, none of which ever have been home to more than twenty-seven hundred residents. Although Santa Fe officials were considerably more active, founding a continuous series of communities, still none of the larger cities on their route were pure railroad creations—not Dodge City, not Garden City, not Hutchinson. And the one place that was so founded, Newton, immediately was subjected to so much second guessing by the company itself that its economy stagnated during the critical early years. This article, a look at the overall strategies of these two companies as they built west, is an attempt to explain this Kansas anomaly.

THE UNION PACIFIC

Although conceived originally as a link to the West by a group of Leavenworth businessmen, the railroad that became the Union Pacific, Eastern Division, in Kansas soon fell under the control of Saint Louis and other out-of-state interests. They were able to insert the route as one of the four eastern branches for the nation's first transcontinental railroad. This brought with it the impressively large land grant previously noted plus federal bonds in the amount of sixteen thousand dollars per mile of completed track. The railroad struggled during its first three years of construction (1863–1865) because of the Civil War, the murder of a key official, and other problems, but built efficiently west from Topeka to Denver in the late 1860s.[4]

To understand the town-founding policies of the Union Pacific, one must realize that central and western Kansas were not very much on the minds of company officials during the period of construction. The Saint Louis,

1. For general background, *see* James E. Vance Jr., *The North American Railroad: Its Origins, Evolution, and Geography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995). The classic regional study is John C. Hudson, *Plains Country Towns* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

2. John W. Reps, *Cities of the American West: A History of Frontier Urban Planning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Wallace D. Farnham, "Grenville Dodge and the Union Pacific: A Study of Historical Legend," *Journal of American History* 51 (March 1965): 632–50.

3. Paul W. Gates, *Fifty Million Acres: Conflicts Over Kansas Land Policy, 1854–1890* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1954), 251.

4. William R. Petrowski, *The Kansas Pacific: A Study in Railroad Promotion* (New York: Arno Press, 1981); Joseph W. Snell and Robert Richmond, "When the Union and Kansas Pacific Built Through Kansas," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 32 (Summer 1966): 161–86; ibid. (Autumn 1966): 334–52.
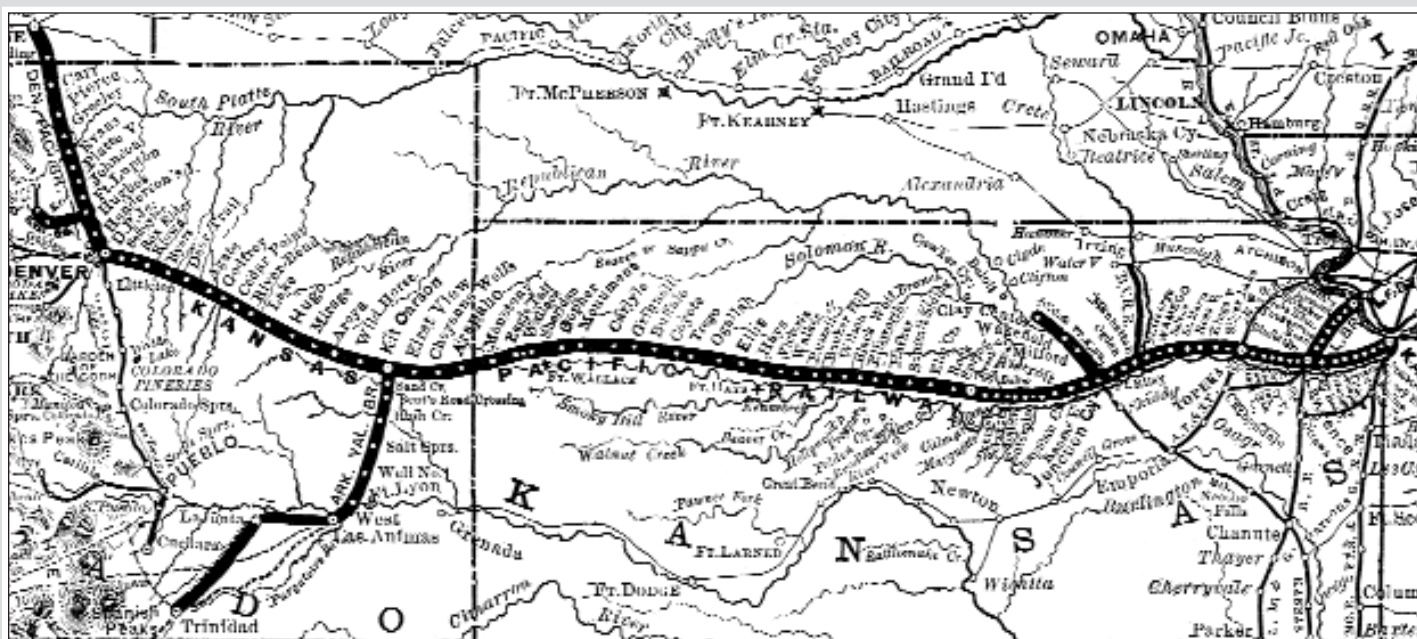
Route of the Union Pacific Railroad, Eastern Division, 1870.

Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia men who dominated the board of directors thought in bigger terms. Emboldened by their subsidies, by the creation of their own construction company (so that, in effect, they were paying themselves), and by the old dreams of western riches and Pacific trade, they saw a chance to create a second transcontinental railroad (the first being the Union Pacific Railroad's "main line" across Nebraska) that had even greater potential for profit than their rival to the north. Gold, timber, and coal in Colorado were immediate goals, as were plans for extensions and/or branches to Salt Lake City, New Mexico, and the coast beyond. These men were efficient builders in Kansas only because they needed to get across the state.[5]

Knowledge that Union Pacific officials viewed western Kansas largely as an obstacle to be overcome explains several of their actions. They spent less than two months on surveys for possible routes, for example, and adopted a course that deviated only slightly from a straight-line shot to Denver and the gold fields. Their corridor was essentially that of the old Smoky Hill Trail, which had been laid out from Leavenworth in 1859 during the initial mining rush to Colorado. This roadway, originally touted as being one hundred miles shorter than alternates up the Platte or Arkansas River valleys, was revived when David A. Butterfield of Atchison proposed its use as a stage and freight line. Butterfield requested military assistance for this endeavor since the Cheyennes, Arapahos, and other native peoples in this region had become increasingly uneasy about intrusions into their realm. This aid, easily procured because of the importance of Colorado, included the establishment of three major military posts at regular intervals: Forts Harker, Hays, and Wallace.[6]

The Butterfield Overland Despatch never was profitable, and changed hands three times before 1868. The forts remained, however, as did the Indian danger. This combination provided a good incentive for the railroad men. Another plus, advantageous for steam engines and horses alike, was in having the route follow the general course of the Smoky Hill River and yet keep mainly to the upland surface along that stream's northern flank. River crossings were thereby frequent enough to furnish water, while at the same time the main route along the divide avoided the long stretches of sand that would plague any competing valley route.[7]

As Robert M. Shoemaker and his track crew pushed across the Kansas landscape in 1867 and 1868, they laid out stations at intervals but did little to develop these points into communities. A person can search in vain to find examples where Union Pacific officials have memorialized themselves in the names of major settlements. Similarly, no subsidiary organization existed that was dedicated exclu-

5. Gates, *Fifty Million Acres*, 251; Petrowski, *The Kansas Pacific*, 144, 177; George L. Anderson, *Kansas West: An Epic of Western Railroad Building* (San Marino, Calif.: Golden West Books, 1963), 69–79.

6. Anderson, *Kansas West*, 27; Leo E. Oliva, *Fort Wallace: Sentinel on the Smoky Hill Trail* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1998), 6–15.
7. Oliva, *Fort Wallace*, 12–13, 44.

Thinking that Fort Harker, depicted here in this 1867 sketch, might be the Union Pacific's western railroad terminal for some time, speculators rapidly founded the town of Ellsworth nearby. A major cholera epidemic, however, dampened enthusiasm, and crews continued to lay track without investing heavily in the town.

sively to platting and promoting new towns. These duties, when required, were assumed by another auxiliary, the National Land Company. But the land company was headquartered in New York City and concentrated its efforts on selling farming and ranching properties in large packages and on promoting group settlement through a series of colonies. With only the merest of exceptions, cities of the region were creations of colonists or other speculators, and many occurred several years after the tracks were in place.[8]

The westernmost preexisting settlement encountered by the Union Pacific crews was Salina. This community, on the "frontier," some fifty miles beyond what might be considered the "outer edge" of settlement when it had been founded in 1858, occupied an advantageous physical location. It lay at the eastern edge of a dissected upland known as the Smoky Hills, and controlled access routes to lands farther west via the convergence of three major lowlands. Trending west–northwest are the Saline and Solomon Rivers, both northbank tributaries to the Smoky Hill, whose valleys would provide ideal trackbeds for railroads. The third lowland, the Smoky Hill itself, is even wider but deviates abruptly to the south at this point for more than twenty miles before angling westward once again. A direct east–west path through the upland does exist, however. The narrow valley of a smaller tributary called Spring Creek became the route for the railroad.

Six miles past Salina and its two hundred residents, the railroad people left the broad lowland and began a thirty-five-mile passage through the unarable, sandstone escarpments of the Smoky Hills. The next potential townsite of consequence lay where the tracks would rejoin the Smoky Hill River after that stream's long meander to the south. With railroad officials taking no initiative, a small group of investors surveyed a property they called Ellsworth in May 1867, two months before the first train arrived. They located it just west of the border of the Fort Harker military reservation, five miles from the post itself. Because people speculated that the railroad men might make the fort their western terminus for some time, "buildings began to sprout like mushrooms." This enthusiasm proved short lived. A major cholera epidemic hit the post in July, killing three hundred people plus fifty others in town. The railroad crews did not pause as expected either, although they did build a blacksmith shop and a four-stall engine house to offer continuing employment. Many residents departed out of health fears, others to speculate at the next railhead. They left Ellsworth the seat of a newly organized county and at least the temporary home of the railroad's second division, but with few hopes for sustainable growth. The town was only eighty-five miles from Junction City, the site of the previous division point, not far enough away for an efficient company operation. Fort Harker's life span also was thought to be short, and it indeed did close in 1873.[9]

8. Thelma J. Curl, "Promotional Efforts of the Kansas Pacific and the Santa Fe to Settle Kansas" (master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1961), 40–48.

9. William G. Cutler and Alfred T. Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), 2:1274–77; Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns* (New York: Atheneum, 1979), 36.

If Union Pacific officials participated only minimally in the early affairs of Ellsworth, they did so even less in places farther to the west. About nine miles beyond Ellsworth, near Black Wolf Station, the tracks leave the valley proper of the Smoky Hill and ascend to the upland divide between it and the Saline River. This move is easy to understand from the perspective of tracklaying because the valley is more incised from this point upstream, whereas the divide is flat and unobstructed. The change in topography and associated vegetation did not help colonization, however. The railroad was now definitely west of the settlement frontier, and potential immigrants were unsure whether their traditional crops would be successful on these true plains. People also had concerns about how they themselves would cope with the wind and the general open terrain. Agents of the National Land Company eventually faced these challenges, but not immediately. Tracklaying went on at a rapid pace, but even local speculators for new cities now became rare.[10]

In 1867, as work on the Union Pacific progressed, the Kansas legislature acknowledged the company's importance by juggling the geometry of the new counties they were creating. The tier that included Ellsworth was positioned slightly farther south than the one for Saline, for example, so that the city of Ellsworth would be central within its county. Similarly, the tiers that contained Russell, Ellis, and Trego Counties were moved back toward the north so that the tracks also would bisect these units. This effort undoubtedly helped settlement in the long run. It did little to overcome contemporary negative comments about the Plains landscape, however, a discussion that increased in volume as travelers sampled the region on the new tracks. Francis Richardson, who rode the line all the way to Denver in 1872, was typical in saying that, although the Smoky Hill Valley appeared to be good land, the rest of "the whole route is a barren waste."[11]

The most obvious drawback to town founding along the fifty-eight-mile stretch between Black Wolf Station and Fort Hays was lack of surface water. None at all existed along the route in Russell County, which accounts for that area having no more than five residents as recently as 1871, three years after railroad construction. Later that same year, when an immigrant colony from Wisconsin finally attempted a settlement at the county's center, their wells proved dry. Luckily for them and the railroad land agent, similar digging was successful five miles to the west. There, in the headwaters of Fossil Creek, the group founded the community of Russell. A grateful railroad company sold them the site for a dollar.[12]

The water situation improved farther west in Ellis County. The tracks crossed the North Fork of Big Creek at a place eventually called Victoria, and then did the same over Big Creek proper at two separate locations. Big Creek is by far the largest tributary to the Smoky Hill River west of Salina. Its value in the seasonally dry Plains environment had been recognized at least as far back as 1859, the first year of the Smoky Hill Trail, and its presence determined the location of Fort Hays and its predecessor, Fort Fletcher. The original post had been established at the North Fork crossing of the trail. Soldiers had ensconced themselves in the valley proper, a sheltered location but also one prone to flooding. When the railroad survey was completed, military officials decided in May 1867 to relocate fifteen miles to the northwest. This placed the new fort, now called Hays, near the eastern crossing of Big Creek proper and close to the center of newly formed Ellis County. The relocation also created easily the best site for a city on the entire 220-mile railroad route from Ellsworth to the Colorado line.[13]

Three St. Louis businessmen led by William E. Webb had purchased three sections of land on speculation at the first Big Creek crossing in late 1866. When Webb learned that the new fort was to be in this same vicinity, he returned to the site and platted a town he called Hays City. Both it and the fort were in operation by June 1867, three and a half months before the first train arrived. Union Pacific officials again elected to stay out of the fray.[14]

The immediate economic prospects for Hays City were quite different from those of Salina or Ellsworth. No important military roads passed by. No plow agriculture of

10. Curl, "Promotional Efforts of the Kansas Pacific and the Santa Fe," 73–79, 154–55; H. Craig Miner, *West of Wichita: Settling the High Plains of Kansas, 1865–1890* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 38–51.

11. The Richardson comments, from a letter written July 21, 1872, are cited in Miner, *West of Wichita*, 39–40.

12. Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 2:1284–86.

13. Leo E. Oliva, *Fort Hays: Keeping Peace on the Plains* (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1980), 2–19.

14. Ibid.; Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 2:1291.

Frontier towns on the Union Pacific Railroad, Eastern Division

In the 1860s the westernmost existing settlement encountered by Union Pacific crews was Salina, founded in 1858 and photographed here in ca. 1870.

In May 1867, two months before the train arrived, private investors surveyed and platted the town they called Ellsworth. In 1871 the town became a major railhead for cattle shipping. It is photographed here in 1879.

A critical drawback to town founding was lack of water. West of Ellsworth and Russell Counties in Ellis County, the water situation improved. Where the railroad crossed the North Fork of Big Creek, the settlement of Victoria was founded. Depicted here is the town's general store, ca. 1880.

In 1867 Fort Hays, and subsequently the town of Hays, was located on the soon-to-come railroad route. Close to the center of the newly formed Ellis County, Hays City became the county seat.

Backtracking east from Wallace over a completed rail line, officials established the railroad division point of Ellis, shown above in the 1870s. Considered to be a "near-perfect" location, Ellis was one hundred miles from Wallace and had access to good water.

In search of another division point, railroad men traveled east from Ellis another hundred miles to the Spring Creek valley to found the town of Brookville in 1870.
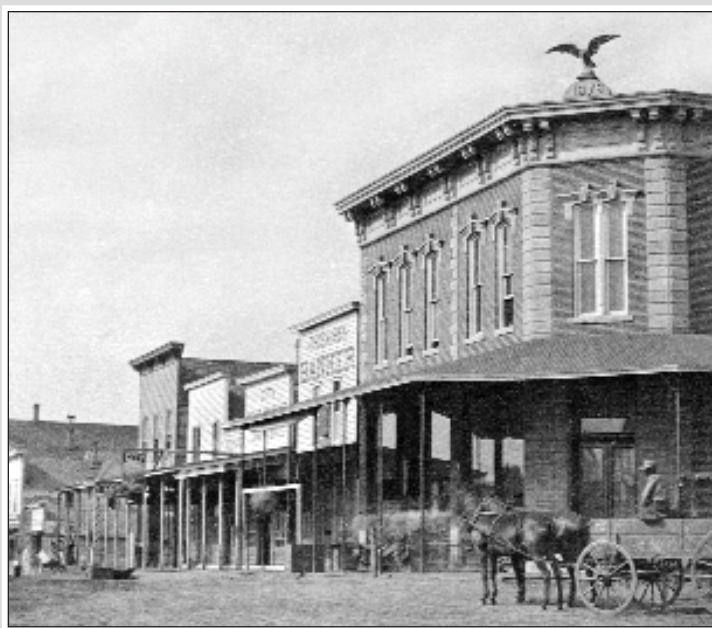
The small settlement of Abilene in Dickinson County became the state's first railhead cowtown, whose boom ran from 1867 until the cattle trade moved west to Ellsworth in 1871. A more "civilized" Abilene is photographed here in its post-cattle town era, in 1879.

any consequence was expected either, although many people felt that the native grasses held good potential for cattle and sheep ranching. Even this grazing lay in the future, however. Probably because the railroad tracks began to penetrate the heart of buffalo country in this vicinity, Indian raids had become frequent enough to dominate everybody's attention. For example, Fort Hays troops fought a combined Arapaho–Cheyenne force of four to five hundred men in a six-hour battle in the nearby Saline valley that first summer. Raids on railroad workers themselves produced six deaths in early August, and crewmen were forced to retreat to the fort for safety many days at a time. As a result, a camp mentality evolved at the town, with elements of army and railroad life combining to produce a sizable population but coarse living conditions. Hays City claimed more than a thousand residents by its first anniversary, but it had no permanent church building until 1877. Its cemetery had been nicknamed Boot Hill before a still younger outpost to the south, Dodge City, borrowed the term and made it famous. With liquor being sold at most of its hundred or so business establishments, a visitor in 1868 reported, "it is certainly a paradise for local editors, and [a] poor place for lawyers, the men generally preferring to do their own lawing, and in their own way."[15]

More than 150 miles of Kansas remained on the Union Pacific route west from Hays City. None of it excited the imaginations of railroad men or anybody else except for those interested in the buffalo hunt. The state legislature had created a series of counties along the route in 1868, but these dissolved themselves after a few futile years, and did not begin to reappear as functioning entities until 1879. The same traveler who had commented about editors and lawyers in Hays also provided a typical description of the trainside view in this region: "For the entire distance . . . not a tree or a shrub relieved the monotonous landscape of level, parched prairie. . . . The remains of sod houses, which have sheltered railroad hands, speculators, and their goods . . . are scattered along the route."[16]

Except for a place called Sheridan that existed for a year at a waterless site where tracklaying stopped in 1868–1869 while awaiting new funding, the only Union Pacific attempt at urban speculation in far-western Kansas was near the last of the state's military posts: Fort Wallace. This site, harsh but functional, was where a tributary called Pond Creek flows into an only slightly larger Smoky Hill River to produce the first regular flow in that latter channel. Significant also was its distance of 130 miles from Fort Hays. Railroad officials realized that they needed a division point in this vicinity and that private speculators would be unlikely to invest money in a place where "not a spear of grass four inches high, dare show its head for fear of the wild winds." Consequently, they decided to construct their first company town.[17]

Wallace, the obvious name for the new community, was platted in 1870. It was never larger than a few hundred people, and retained its status as a division point only a few years until the fort closed in 1882.[18] Its establishment is important, however, because it initiated a ripple effect of town foundings by the railroad men. Once Denver had been reached, time was available for officials to improve efficiency along the now-completed line. This included the optimal spacing of division points, each about a hundred miles apart and with access to good water. The planners realized that water was the critical element in their choice and that their calculations needed to focus around the small High Plains oasis at Wallace. Working their way eastward from that point, a near-perfect combination of distance and water presented itself in western Ellis County, where the tracks crossed Big Creek thirteen miles west of Hays City. This, they decided in 1870, would become a new community called Ellis.

Farther east in Kansas, the water issue lessened, but the railroad men decided to keep their distances per division as regular as possible. In the narrow confines of Spring Creek valley, 102 miles east of Ellis, they created another new town: Brookville. All this happened during April 1870.

The practice of a railroad company creating its own towns for division points is nothing unusual, of course. To

15. Oliva, *Fort Hays*, 35–40; Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 2:1291–92; *Lawrence Kansas Weekly Tribune*, June 8, 1868, quotation in Snell and Richmond, "When the Union and Kansas Pacific Built Through Kansas," 346.

16. Oliva, *Fort Wallace*, 41; Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 2:1297; Snell and Richmond, "When the Union and Kansas Pacific Built Through Kansas," 347.

17. Oliva, *Fort Wallace*, 31–41. Oliva attributes the quotation to a Missouri newspaper correspondent who visited the fort in May 1870.

18. Ibid., 31, 122.

do so after the line was already in operation, however, and to ignore nearby, larger communities that willingly would have bid for the opportunity to capture new jobs, marks the Kansas Pacific (the new name acquired by the railroad in 1869) as unique on the Kansas scene. The people in Hays City were upset at the cavalier moves, of course, as were those in Salina, only fifteen miles from Brookville. Angrier still were the residents of Ellsworth, who saw their existing facilities transferred to Ellis. These decisions all were justified in the names of efficiency and of lower land costs outside existing communities. They clearly stymied the hopes of many entrepreneurs, however, who dreamed of accumulating a given area's railroad, government, and manufacturing employment all at a single site, and thereby creating a major city. The recipient towns each grew modestly, but both had larger rival communities nearby and also lay in rugged terrain not suitable for traditional agricultural settlement. Brookville and Ellis claimed about six hundred residents apiece in 1880.[19]

The unusual behavior of Kansas Pacific officials in creating Brookville and Ellis is almost certainly related to another important regional event of the 1867–1871 period: cattle drives. This phenomenon, still the source of much imagery and symbolism for the entire Great Plains, was a huge financial bonanza for Kansas Pacific stockholders because they had their tracks in place before rival railroad companies built into southern Kansas. These cattle drives also directly modified the incipient urban structure along the Kansas Pacific in one important instance.

The reincarnation of the small settlement of Abilene into the first Kansas railhead cowtown is a familiar story that does not need repetition here. The boom there, which started in 1867, lasted through the 1871 season. Although not totally a positive experience because it ushered in "a crowd of cutthroats, black legs, thugs, gamblers, and prostitutes" along with the cattle money, it most certainly elevated the community's status within the urban hierarchy.

This success also provoked envy, of course, and therefore rivals. The most formidable of these appeared several counties to the south where the Santa Fe railroad in 1871 was in the process of intercepting the state's principal cattle trail. Kansas Pacific officials were not about to concede the trade without a fight, however. As more farmers entered Dickinson County and Abilene townspeople themselves began to tire of the fray, the company made two moves, both of which proved futile.[20]

First, as a temporary measure, the railroad men allowed a Saint Louis firm to erect a stockyard at Ellsworth and reported to their board of directors that they expected this town to become a major shipping point for 1871. Then, in an effort to control the trade entirely by themselves, they decided to create a new city devoted exclusively to cattle. Their choice was a heretofore-neglected station in extreme northwestern Ellsworth County. No settlers were in the region to object, and they hoped that the climate and terrain there might dictate a permanent grassland economy. The National Land Company revealed their intentions at the platting in September 1871. Utilizing the genus name of cattle, they called the place Bosland. As it happened, the greater distance drovers had to travel to the Kansas Pacific line once the Santa Fe was operational in 1871 cut Ellsworth's glory to a single season and never allowed Bosland's to begin. Settlers there quietly changed the name to Wilson.[21]

As its name suggests, the second major railroad across Kansas was established with a vision of continuing the trade legacy of the Santa Fe Trail. Its origins date to the territorial period and the business ambitions of Topeka's founder, Cyrus K. Holliday. He took in partners from Atchison, partly to gain access to the Chicago market and partly to enlist the political support of Senator Samuel Pomeroy, an Atchison resident. When Pomeroy dutifully procured a federal land grant in March 1863, the project became feasible. It also gave the board of directors almost complete freedom on the selection of route, specifying only that the tracks must cross the western border of Kansas

19. Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 1:706–7, 2:1007, 1294; Harry Hughes and Helen C. Dingler, *From River Ferries to Interchanges: A Brief History of Saline County, Kansas From the 1850's to the 1980's* (Salina, Kans.: 1988), 56; Jennie Martin, *A Brief History of the Early Days of Ellis, Kansas* (N. p., 1903), 7–8; Maureen Winter, ed., *Indians to Industry: A History of Hays and Ellis County* (Ellis, Kans.: Ellis County Star, 1967), 90–92.

20. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*, 358; George L. Cushman, "Abilene, First of the Kansas Cow Towns," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 9 (August 1940): 240–58.

21. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*, 37–40; Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 2:1280.

within ten years or the unsold grant acreage would revert back to the public domain.[22] Nobody thought much about these restrictions in 1863, but the date and the destination both proved frustrating to company officials and critically important to the pattern of urban evolution throughout much of the state.

By the time the Civil War was over and sufficient money had been raised to begin construction in October 1868, the alternatives for locating the first sixty miles of track had been carefully studied. From Topeka, the route was to go south into Osage County where coal seams of mineable thickness were known to exist, and then turn southwest to intersect another planned railroad at Emporia (the Union Pacific, Southern Branch), which was building southeast from Junction City. Farmers and small towns already occupied these first miles, but Thomas J. Peter, the general superintendent of the railroad, envisioned coal mining on a large enough scale to supply the demands of his own steam engines plus the heating requirements of communities along his route. To better control this valuable resource and to house the hundreds of miners he anticipated needing, Peter decided to establish two company towns. The first, sixteen miles south of Topeka, he called Carbondale. Because of its proximity to the capital city, this was never intended to be a large settlement. Railroad officials leased several thousand acres of coal land, however, and created the Carbon Coal Company to undertake the mining proper. This company also was charged with erecting houses for the miners and a store for general merchandise, which they did in the spring of 1869. Several months later, when a contract was announced to supply coal for the Kansas Pacific Railroad as well as the Santa Fe, the future looked assured.[23]

Nine miles southwest of Carbondale lay Burlingame, the seat of Osage County at the time and the oldest settlement in the area. Peter dutifully ran his tracks through this town, but because no good coal seams had been located in the immediate area, the company made no investments.[24]

Instead, he cast his eyes on another tract of land nine miles farther south where surveys had revealed the best coal deposits in the region. Coincidentally, this site was midway between Topeka and Emporia, and so a city there potentially could command a good-sized trade area.

Osage City, as the new community was christened, probably had its origins in 1868 when Peter and other Santa Fe officials learned of the existence of a coal seam thirty-six inches thick in the vicinity. Peter himself bought the land parcel, but the actual development was assigned to a new subsidiary organization of the railroad, the Arkansas Valley Town Company. John F. Dodds, the Santa Fe's chief land agent, surveyed the site in late 1869, several months before the tracks were completed, and he stayed on to ensure a quality development. All went as planned. The mines opened in the summer of 1870, and a decade later twelve hundred men were employed in twenty-eight shafts spread over thirty thousand acres of coal leases. About half of total production was directly controlled by the Santa Fe, which had shifted its mining unit, the Carbon Coal Company, to the new town from Carbondale.[25]

Osage City, although never envisioned as a metropolis, was planned to be much more than a rough mining camp. Consequently, the town company laid out wide streets, installed lamps on every corner, and encouraged the use of brick and stone in construction. A visitor in 1883 was impressed, noting not only a general neatness of appearance but also educational and religious institutions "of a very superior order."[26] The community never was able to garner the county-seat designation, but it claimed 2,089 residents in 1880 and 3,469 a decade later, both figures the largest in Osage County.

Following the decision to create Osage City, no great strategy sessions were necessary for the next section of track. Peter laid nearly a straight-line survey southwest to Emporia and built this line during the summer of 1870. The choice of Emporia was easy, even though the Santa Fe had no financial interests in this preexisting community. People there had voted for a two-hundred-thousand-dol-

22. Joseph W. Snell and Don W. Wilson, "The Birth of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 34 (Summer 1968): 117.

23. Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 2:1555; Snell and Wilson, "The Birth of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad," 30, 134.

24. D. Lane Hartsock, "The Impact of the Railroads on Coal Mining in Osage County, 1869–1910," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 37 (Winter 1971): 431.

25. Ibid., 433; Oscar A. Copple and Joyce M. Hitchings, *History of Osage City, and Osage County* (N. p., 1970), 21–22; Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 2:1542–43, 1555.

26. Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 2:1542.

The decision to build the Santa Fe railroad south from Topeka to Osage County was due in part to the potential for coal mining, which railroad officials developed in the area. At right is a stock certificate for shares in the Osage Land and Mining Company, signed by company president and Santa Fe superintendent T. J. Peter.

lar bond issue, and officials from both the railroad and the town saw mutual benefits in creating an intersection between Holliday's line and Emporia's own creation, the Union Pacific, Southern Branch Railroad (soon to be renamed the Missouri, Kansas and Texas), which extended along the Neosho River valley. A final and probably even more fundamental reason the Santa Fe people selected Emporia was the same one identified by that town's founders in 1857. The Cottonwood River, which joins the Neosho at this point, carves an excellent route west through the Flint Hills. Savings in construction costs would be considerable by utilizing this lowland, and this was the way tracklayers went during the winter of 1870–1871.[27]
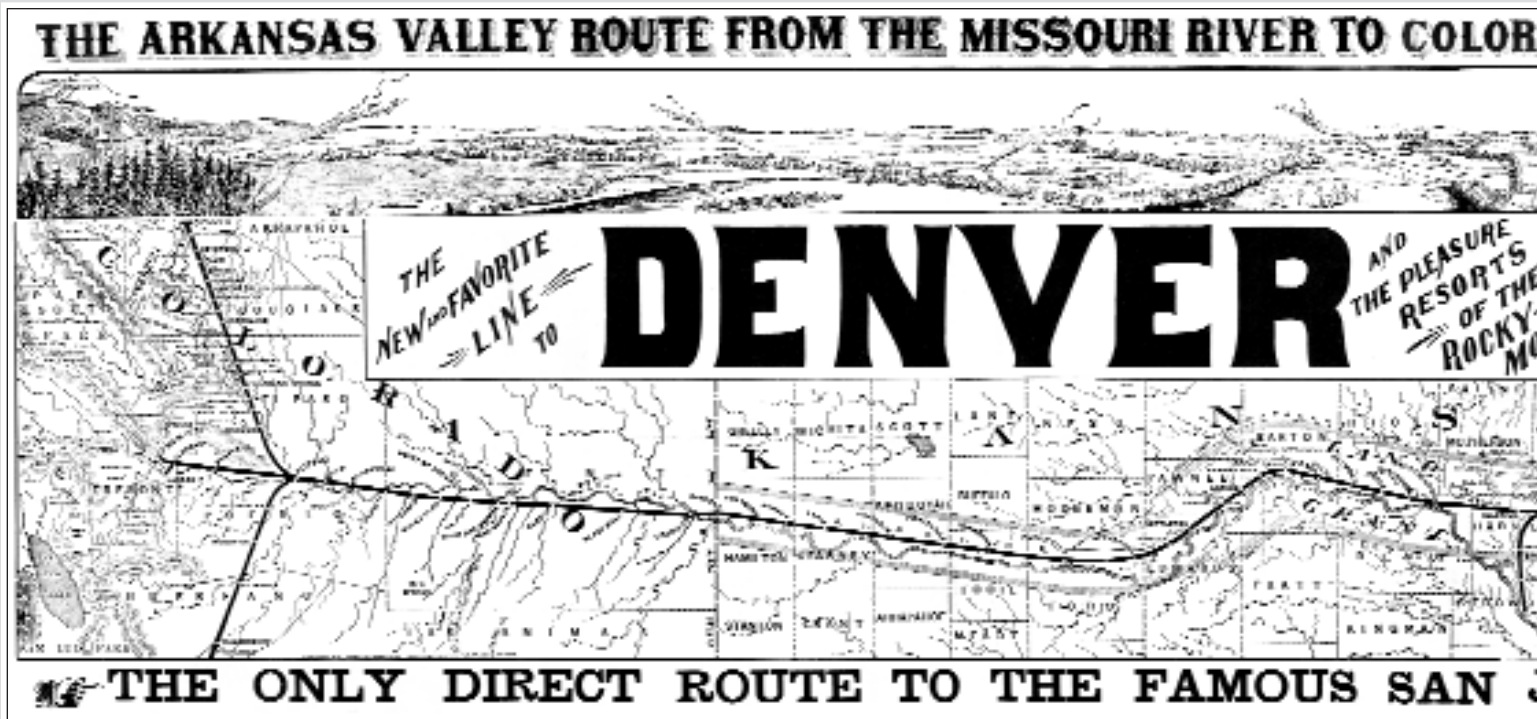
Once through the Flint Hills, the railroad entered unsettled territory, and its owners, who by now were dominated by a group of Boston investors, began to confront a dilemma. To meet the terms of the land grant, it seemed prudent to head straight west to an intersection with the Arkansas River (perhaps near present Sterling) and then follow this stream to the western border of Kansas. This course of action would yield no immediate profits, however. An attractive alternative was to partici-

pate as fully as possible in the cattle trade from Texas, which had been growing steadily in volume since 1865. This, however, would dictate construction to the south. To give themselves time to consider the predicament, a compromise order was issued to Superintendent Peter. He was to take a southwesterly course to a new townsite that had been recommended the previous summer by David L. Lakin, the head of the railroad's land-development office. Lakin's choice was odd in some ways, still fifteen miles northeast of the Arkansas River, and with only a small supply of surface water from a stream called Sand Creek. The site's redeeming virtue, however, was livestock. This was where the railroad's path toward the Arkansas intersected the largest current cattle trail in Kansas.[28]

A name for the Sand Creek settlement, Newton, was announced in February 1871, five months before the arrival of the first train. Officials said this place would serve as the terminus of the line for that season, and that a stockyard sufficient to hold six thousand cattle would be in place by summer. All this forecasting was to alert Texas

27. Ibid, 846; George A. Hamm, "The Atchison Associates of the Santa Fe Railroad," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 42 (Winter 1976): 353; Snell and Wilson, "The Birth of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad," 118–19, 141, 330.

28. Arthur M. Johnson and Barry E. Supple, *Boston Capitalists and Western Railroads* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 287–318; William T. Moran, *Santa Fe and the Chisholm Trail at Newton* (Newton, Kans.: 1970), 9–10.

THE ARKANSAS VALLEY ROUTE FROM THE MISSOURI RIVER TO COLOR...

THE New and FAVORITE LINE to DENVER and THE PLEASURE RESORTS OF THE ROCKY MO...

THE ONLY DIRECT ROUTE TO THE FAMOUS SAN J...

drovers to a superior shipping opportunity. No longer would animals have to follow the established Chisholm Trail north all the way to Abilene on the Kansas Pacific Railroad, as they had done for the previous four seasons. By utilizing the new facilities of the Santa Fe, they could save seventy-five to eighty miles of time and animal weight loss. It was still another plan that turned out successfully for the company, at least in the short run. Herds arrived in town beginning in May, and forty thousand head were shipped out that summer.[29]

Nobody on the Santa Fe directorate disagreed with the establishment of Newton as a cattle town. The decision meant a needed infusion of capital for the company and the first substantial return on investment for the Boston men.[30] A major difference of opinion existed about the city's future, however, especially as compared with other possibilities for urban development in the immediate vicinity. These officials knew that their tracks now stretched out some 136 miles from Topeka, about as far as was practicable for a single division to run. A permanent site was therefore needed for repair shops and a division headquarters. Should Newton, with its suspect water, be this place or not? The future of the cattle market also was tricky. Just as Santa Fe people themselves were in the process of intercepting business from the Kansas Pacific, some other railroad could reach farther south and repeat the process. Why not build the Santa Fe in this direction now to head off such a future challenge? Several officials favored this latter idea, including Holliday and Peter. They suggested what they perceived as a intermediate position. Extend the main line south from Newton another twenty-seven miles to a small settlement called Wichita, established the year before on the Arkansas River, and then proceed west from there.[31]

Proponents of the Wichita strategy had several items in their favor. Reliable water would make this a better division point than Newton, and a spur on south to the boundary of Indian Territory would corner the cattle market for the foreseeable future. In addition, a straight-line

29. Moran, *Santa Fe and the Chisholm Trail at Newton* 26, 43, 50; Snell and Wilson, "The Birth of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad," 336.

30. The favorable financial news that accompanied Newton's creation perhaps explains the town's name. It honors the Massachusetts home of several major railroad investors. *See* Sondra Van Meter and Jan Hults, *1001 Kansas Place Names* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 143.

31. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*, 48–50; L. L. Waters, *Steel Trails to Santa Fe* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1950), 47.

(Left) The route of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. Santa Fe superintendent Thomas J. Peter (right) wheeled and dealed his way southwest across Kansas, building the Santa Fe line and reaching Colorado in 1872.
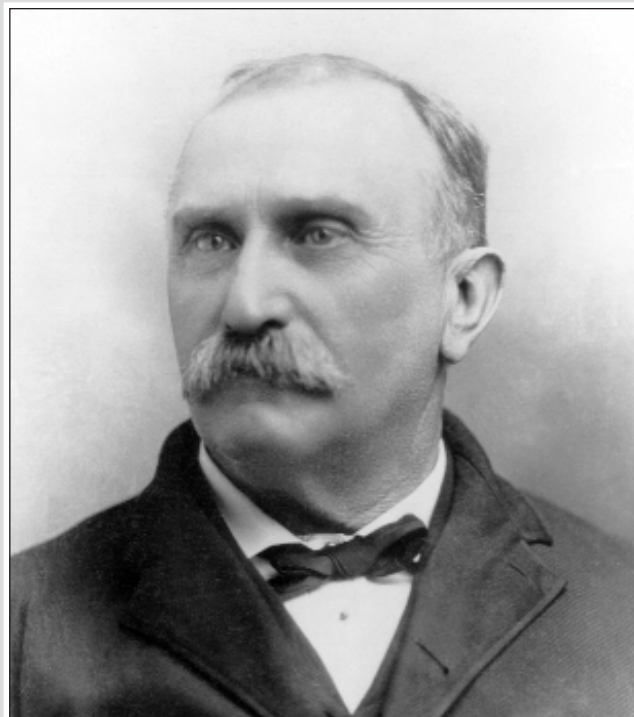
route west from Wichita to the Colorado border arguably could make more sense than the anticipated path from Newton. The key here was a large northward bend of the Arkansas River in central Kansas. Following this bend northwest from Newton and then back to the south would require many more miles than would the overland Wichita alternative. Moreover, after bypassing the bend, this latter, direct-line route would meet the Arkansas again just east of Fort Dodge for the passage across the High Plains.

Opponents of the Wichita proposal, predominately the Boston contingent of the directorate, acknowledged its attractiveness but worried about several things. Because the town already existed, the railroad could not control development there. There also was a technical matter arising from Wichita's position not on public lands per se, but rather within the former reservation of the Osage Indians. Although this territory had been ceded to the United States, it was supposed to be sold to benefit the tribe and not given to a railroad as part of a grant. Could the old treaty be modified? The answer probably was yes, but such a resolution would have taken time that the railroad officials did not have to spare. They realized that any significant delays in moving west would seriously compromise the company's chances to qualify for its full federal land grant in a more fundamental way. In January 1872 only fourteen months remained for track completion to Colorado out of the ten years that Congress had allotted. In this time, approximately 285 miles had to be built west

from Newton. So did fifty hitherto neglected miles from Topeka to Atchison. The company therefore could perhaps not afford either luxury: going to court or constructing twenty-seven additional miles to the south without assurances of a grant in that region. As for the proposed savings by avoiding the big bend of the Arkansas, these dollars probably would be more than counterbalanced by those required to bridge that large river at Wichita.

Despite much debate, Santa Fe officials were unable to resolve their thorny issues of priority during the critical year of 1871. The next season, while attempting to pursue all of their agendas simultaneously, they inadvertently helped to fabricate a far more complex urban system for south-central Kansas than otherwise might have prevailed. Ostensibly, the initial developments seemed to favor Newton. The town was proclaimed the first division point southwest from Topeka and the site for sizable repair shops. The directors also elected to construct their main line west from town instead of first digressing south, and to utilize the Arkansas River lowland as its path to Colorado. A third decision of 1871, however, initiated a process that eventually cost Newton its chance to dominate urban life in the region. Ironically, it was an action endorsed by the local residents themselves.

The fateful third decision was the passage in August of a large, local bond issue to finance a new railroad called the Wichita and Southwestern. Essentially a spur for the Santa Fe, these tracks would run only from Newton to Wichita,

# Frontier towns on the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad

The Santa Fe ran its tracks southwest of Carbondale to the oldest settlement in the area, Burlingame, located in coal-mining country. The town's train depot is photographed here much later, in the 1890s.

From Osage City, the Santa Fe traveled southwest to Emporia, seen here (left) in ca. 1862. The town would serve as the intersection for the Santa Fe line with the Union Pacific, Southern Branch.

Rather than heading straight west from Emporia, the Santa Fe decided to participate in the Texas cattle trade and build tracks south. The settlement of Newton was founded in 1871 as the rail terminus on the Chisholm Trail. Newton's original Santa Fe depot is depicted here in 1878.
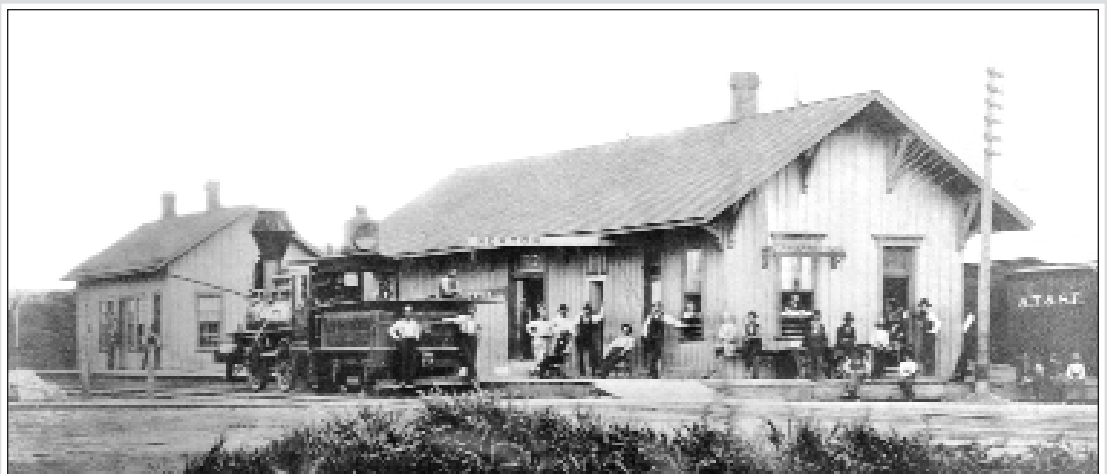
Although the main line proceeded west from Newton, a Santa Fe spur, the Wichita and Southwestern, was built south to the developing settlement of Wichita, creating a cattle trade center there in 1872. Downtown Wichita is photographed here (left) in 1878.

At the railroad's juncture with the Arkansas River, Clinton C. Hutchinson founded and developed a town by the same name. Hutchinson became the county seat for Reno County and is depicted here (right) in 1879.
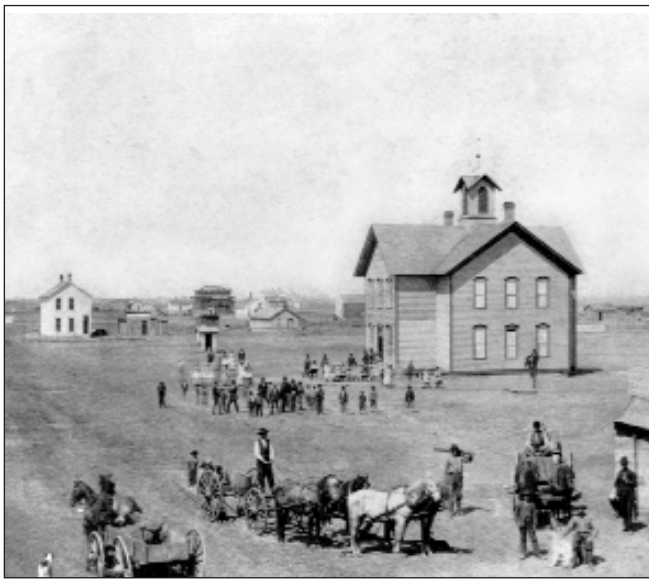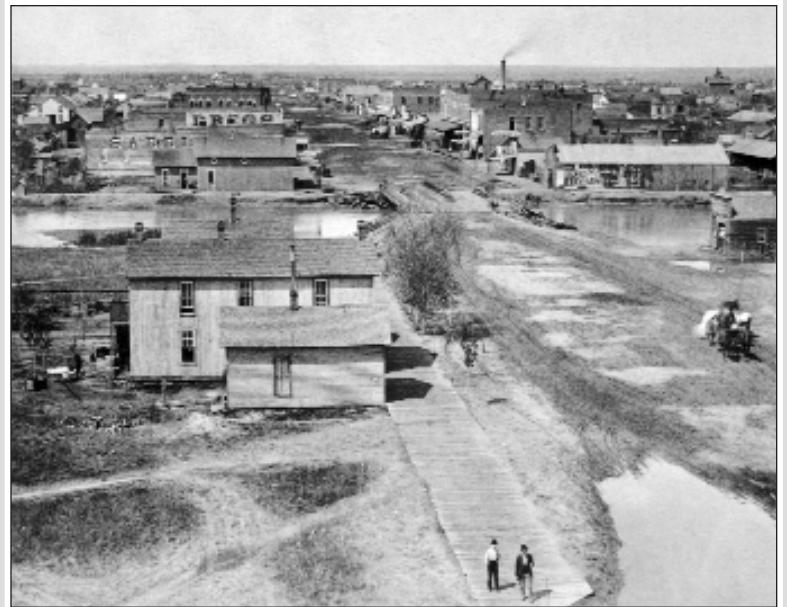
Following the Arkansas River, the Santa Fe built through the already existing town of Great Bend. The county seat of Barton County, Great Bend grew to more than one thousand residences by 1880. It is seen here in 1874.

The Dodge City Town Company was founded in August 1872, a month before track was laid to the area. The settlement held several advantages, among them the buffalo trade and by 1876, the cattle trade. Saloons were a common site in Kansas's westernmost cowtown.

but in the process, they would guarantee a new cattle center. Wichita people obviously were in favor of such construction, and so was Thomas Peter and several other members of the Santa Fe leadership. Peter, in fact, can be said to have initiated the bond issue. When one of Wichita's founders, James R. Mead, learned that the main Santa Fe line likely would go west from Newton rather than south, he had asked Peter what it would take to obtain a track for his community of six hundred people. The superintendent's telegram in reply, now famous in Wichita circles, read as follows: "In answer to yours of 2d [June 2, 1871] will say, if your people will organize a local company and vote $200,000 of county bonds, I will build a railroad to Wichita within six months."[32]

To understand the bond issue, one must first realize that Newton and Wichita both lay within Sedgwick County, which at that time was a twin to Butler County in size and shape. Wichita needed Newton's votes and obtained enough of them to carry the bonds by pushing two arguments. First was a supposed gain in sophistication that would accrue to Newton residents if they were to abandon the vulgarity of cowtown life now that numerous, high-quality railroad jobs were coming in as replacements. The other was a promise to support a plan to carve out a new county from the existing structure that would be centered on Newton. This latter maneuver would allow both Wichita and Newton to become county seats and thereby gain additional desirable employment. With some grease from Santa Fe lobbyists, the state legislature passed a bill to this effect during their 1872 session. A new Harvey County thereby emerged, containing ten townships taken from Sedgwick and three from McPherson (plus, the next year, two from Marion). By 1878 or so, the two thousand residents of Newton were well pleased with their fate. They enjoyed quality railroad and county jobs and were seeing the beginnings of a substantial milling industry that took advantage of the area's flat terrain, fertile soils, and good shipping connections. Finally, the spur line to Wichita had made Newton a junction point and therefore a likely spot for the development of wholesale trade.[33]

The picture of contentment at Newton was to be fairly short lived, at least from the perspective of its promoters who had hoped that Santa Fe favoritism would lead to metropolitan status. The first negative issue to reveal itself was water. Sand Creek supplies proved too small to provide for a growing community and too poor in quality for use in steam locomotives. Engineers in the shops tried various additives, but the problem grew severe. In 1879 railroad officials decided that the best recourse was relocation of all major facilities to a better-watered site. This judgment was wonderful for their new choice, Nickerson, forty-five miles farther west in the Arkansas Valley, but traumatic for Newton. As a local writer expressed the situation, the town "was left to languish on the prairie."[34]

Languish is actually much too negative a word to describe Newton accurately in the 1880s. Local agriculture, milling, and the town's still excellent railroad facilities produced a steady increase in population, from 2,601 in 1880 to 5,605 a decade later. Still, the loss of Santa Fe employment hurt local egos and reduced the chances for additional rail connections and therefore for even faster growth. In particular, the 1880s was a time when several railroad companies were building east–west across southeastern Kansas and deciding where to join with the Santa Fe system. Had Newton kept the shops and the population these implied, this city would have been the logical choice. Without these facilities, however, the junction site became more problematical. As a result, people in the cowtown of Wichita were given a critical opportunity to diversify and expand that they otherwise never have enjoyed.[35]

As Wichita residents frantically scrambled with their new-found cattle business, members of the Santa Fe's board of directors, Superintendent Peter, and their track crews had no time to reflect on pos-

32. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*, 50; Moran, *Santa Fe and the Chisholm Trail at Newton*, 42.

33. Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 1:772–73; Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*, 52; Moran, *Santa Fe and the Chisholm Trail at Newton*, 67.

34. Moran, *Santa Fe and the Chisholm Trail at Newton*, 80–82, 94; *Newton Kansan*, August 22, 1922, "Fiftieth Anniversary Number," 42–44.

35. The story of Newton's loss of the railroad shops and division point in 1879 has an ironic ending, because through another economic adjustment by Santa Fe officials, the town was able to reclaim both of these prizes in 1897. A relocation of a portion of the railroad's main line in 1886 left the big-bend section of the tracks in a bypassed position. This isolated section included Nickerson, the replacement site for the shops. Railroad people then privately approached Newton leaders with a proposal to return the facilities to the city if a better water supply could be procured. This opportunity prompted local fund raising and then the drilling

sible future developments for that site or any others to the south. Their challenge lay in a different direction. With less than a year remaining for them to reach Colorado, the railroad men hurried back to Newton and put their concerted effort into laying track to the west. This work proved laudable. The new construction soon reminded many reporters of a push made by the old Southern Branch line down the Neosho valley to Indian Territory two years earlier. Crews from each enterprise accomplished the considerable feat of setting two miles of track per day on a regular basis. Occasionally, they laid an amazing three. Both companies also beat their deadlines. The Santa Fe's tracks reached Colorado on December 28, 1872, slightly fewer than eight months after workmen had left Newton. The land grant was now secure, but obviously there had been precious little time and money to spare on the creation of cities.[36]

Anybody looking west from Newton could see that the first townsite with superior potential for growth would occur at the railroad's junction with the Arkansas River. The distance (about thirty miles on that bearing) would be far enough from Newton to command a trade area of its own, and water power should be abundant for industry. The only mystery concerned where exactly this spot would be. Railroad people usually camouflaged their surveying operations, but time pressures did not allow for secrecy in this case. Consequently, an enterprising New York man named Clinton C. Hutchinson, who previously had helped found Ottawa, simply followed the crew's line of stakes, projected their endpoint at the river, and negotiated a plan of action with railroad officials at their annual board meeting in Topeka. If the company would sell him the land for a town, he would develop it. Both parties would share equally in the sale of lots.[37]

Hutchinson, as the new settlement was named, developed in a regular but not spectacular manner. This was much as one would expect with the competitors of Newton and Wichita both nearby. Clinton Hutchinson opened a real estate office and successfully promoted himself for election to the Kansas House of Representatives. There, with assistance from the railroad lobby, he engineered a shift in the boundaries of his Reno County similar to that done for Newton. Instead of being on the northern edge of the old unit, Hutchinson was now nearer the center and thereby able to secure the county seat. By 1876 two mills operated on the river, and four years later Hutchinson had a population of 1,540. Its future looked to be that of a slightly larger than average county-seat town.[38]

One measure of the speed at which Santa Fe workers built across western Kansas is that in June 1872, as the first regular-service train pulled into Hutchinson, survey crews already were locating the right-of-way near Fort Dodge, 150 miles farther west. This rapid pace, plus the decision to follow the north bank of the Arkansas River, meant a route that was essentially fixed. Existing towns in the pathway would benefit, and the railroad company would insert a few extra stations as needed. On the long stretch toward Fort Dodge, the Santa Fe built through two already existing county-seat towns (Great Bend and Larned) and partnered with a Chicago group to create what they expected would be a third at Kinsley (originally called Petersburg after the general superintendent). The railroad's Arkansas Valley Town Company added four others in the gaps: Nickerson, Raymond, Ellinwood, and Pawnee Rock. None of the latter group were expected to grow. In fact, Superintendent Peter offhandedly contracted for depots at all four places on the same day in July. The three county-seat communities fared moderately better, mostly through local trade. Great Bend and Larned grew to just over a thousand residents apiece by 1880, while Kinsley, farther west, recorded 457. The only special railroad facilities in these places were a small stockyard at Great Bend and an eating house at Kinsley, "where the noonday meals are furnished eastern and western passengers."[39]

Upstream from Kinsley, the Arkansas River makes a U-shaped bend, angling southwest for about twenty-five

of a wellfield in the Little Arkansas valley near Halstead. The Santa Fe furnished the right-of-way for a pipeline back to Newton, and in exchange, the city council provided building lots for transferred employees and free water to the company for seven years. *See Newton Kansan*, August 22, 1922, "Fiftieth Anniversary Number," 42–43.

36. Snell and Wilson, "The Birth of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad," 347–48, 354.

37. Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 2:1371–72.

38. Ibid.; Snell and Wilson, "The Birth of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad," 337.

39. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*, 56; Myron C. Burr and Elizabeth Burr, eds., *The Kinsley-Edwards County Centennial, 1873–1973* (Kinsley, Kans.: Nolan Publishers, 1973), 4; Snell and Wilson, "The Birth of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad," 348; Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 1:765, 2:1368.

miles before turning back toward the north. By leaving the valley at this point and cutting overland instead, a traveler could save a dozen miles. One branch of the Santa Fe Trail had taken this option. So did the railroad surveyors. People who followed this project realized that the spot where the tracks would rejoin the river valley would be an obvious city location, especially since the elapsed distance from Newton was such as to require another division point and set of repair shops. As a result, a group of officers stationed at nearby Fort Dodge joined with the Santa Fe's own planning staff to create the Dodge City Town Company. They did so in August, a month ahead of the track crew.[40]

Dodge City had a favorable location from several perspectives. On a local scale, it lay just beyond a liquor-free zone that the army had imposed within five miles of Fort Dodge, its westernmost Kansas outpost on the Santa Fe Trail. Looking more broadly, everybody with an interest in the cattle business judged the potential for marketing there to be superb. To begin, Dodge City occupied the southernmost point on the main line. More important, most observers judged the climate in this part of the state sufficiently arid to discourage homesteading. If this proved to be the case, then Dodge City might not face the short life span characteristic of more eastern cowtowns where coalitions of farmers, ministers, and others soon forced the boisterous, transient society away. Even if Wichita and other places were to maintain the cattle trade for several more years, the founders of Dodge City were not worried. This area in 1872 lay at the heart of buffalo country, where an estimated two thousand hunters were participating in what had become a very lucrative, if bloody, business.[41]

Buffalo did indeed prove to be the first mainstay in the city's economic growth. One prominent merchant, Robert M. Wright, bought and shipped over two hundred thousand hides in the winter of 1872–1873, when he reported the streets of town to be "lined with wagons, bringing in hides and meat and getting supplies from early morning to late at night." These numbers declined rapidly over the next few years, but cattle replaced them almost animal for animal. At the annual Santa Fe board meeting in 1875, officials were told that the Wichita area was rapidly becoming too crowded for the drovers, and that new facilities needed to be developed elsewhere. The planners thought about Great Bend, but both its distance from the grazing lands of Indian Territory and the likelihood that the state quarantine line against Texas splenic fever would be moved at least that far west, argued against this site. They decided instead to focus on Dodge City.

The year 1876, when drovers brought 9,540 head up what came to be known as the Western Trail, was the first notable cattle season for the new community. Herdsmen found saloons in abundance and the Santa Fe ready with an impressive stockyard that stretched two miles along the tracks. By 1882, when the shipment level had jumped to sixty-five thousand head, the station operation had expanded to include nine switches, separate pens for sheep, two roundhouses with twenty-six stalls apiece, and a substantial machine shop. Despite having recorded a population of only 996 in the 1880 census, the town already had come to dominate a huge area. In addition to southwestern Kansas, this reach extended deep into the Texas panhandle with the Jones and Plummer freight trail to the small outpost of Mobeetie and a military road to Fort Supply and beyond. People thought of Dodge City as a cattle town, but it was very much a railroad one as well.[42]

Ford County, with Dodge City as its seat, was the last organized political unit traversed by the Santa Fe on its passage across Kansas. With speed still on the minds of the construction engineers, town planning was minimal throughout the remaining 120 miles to the state line. The three largest stations, established at equal intervals along the route, all were named after company officials: Pierceville, Lakin, and Coolidge. Only Coolidge, near the Colorado line, was given any facilities beyond a depot, and it only a small machine shop and the temporary offices for the western division. In retrospect, the most glaring omission was a stop of any kind at what was to become Garden City. The first settlers at this site, a group from Sterling, in Rice County, were relatively late arrivals. They had to use

40. C. Robert Haywood, *The Merchant Prince of Dodge City: The Life and Times of Robert M. Wright* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 38; Frederic R. Young, *Dodge City: Up Through a Century in Story and Pictures* (Dodge City, Kans.: Boot Hill Publications, 1972), 19–20.

41. Haywood, *The Merchant Prince of Dodge City*, 37–38.

42. Robert M. Wright, *Dodge City, the Cowboy Capital, and the Great Southwest* (Wichita: Wichita Eagle Press, 1913), 76–77; Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns*, 60–61, 79; Cutler and Andreas, *History of the State of Kansas*, 2:1560; C. Robert Haywood, *Trails South: The Wagon-Road Economy in the Dodge City-Panhandle Region* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986).

This image, in part titled "End of Track" by photographer J. Lee Knight, was taken near Dodge City when the Santa Fe reached that area in September 1872. The "end," however, was momentary at most, as the rail line rapidly pushed on, some 120 miles farther west, reaching the Kansas–Colorado border in December of that year, thus securing the federal land grant procured nearly ten years prior.
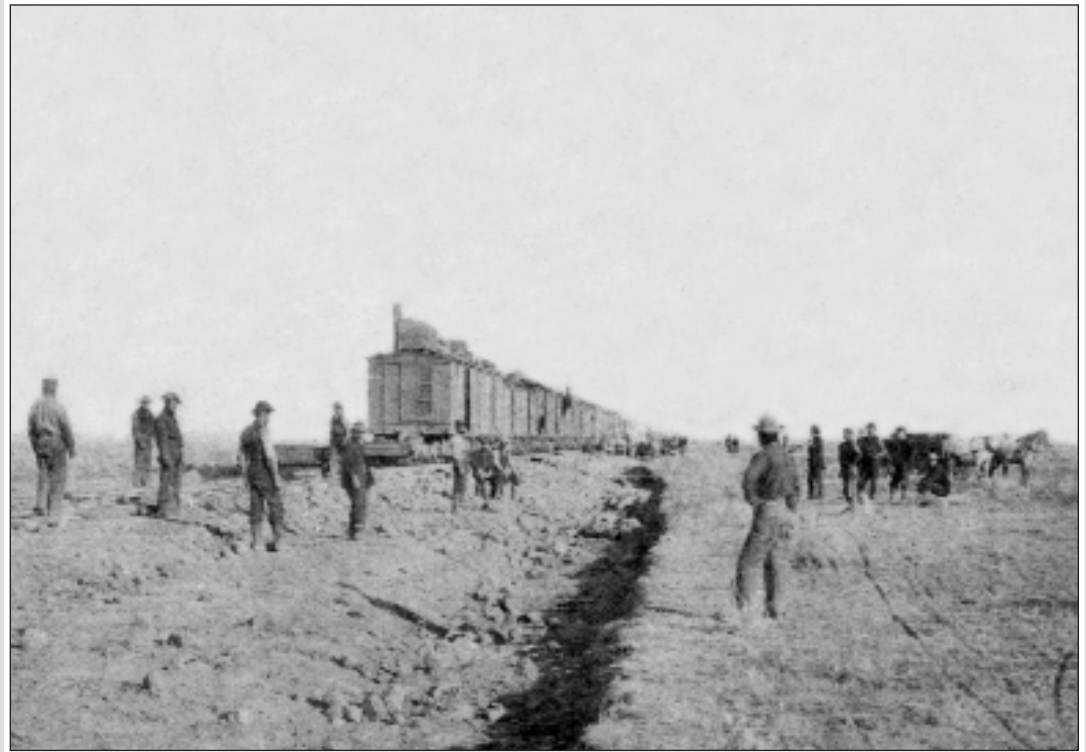
the depot at Sherlock, seven miles west, for several months in 1879 until they were able to barter a selection of town lots to the railroad in exchange for a depot. Growth in Garden City did not begin until after 1880, when an irrigation ditch dug in desperation proved to be successful and an attraction for new settlers and investors.[43]

What can one make of the Santa Fe town founding experience? Kansans of the time judged this company far more kindly than they did the Union Pacific, praising its policies of rapid selection of grant lands and active recruitment of settlers from the eastern states, Germany, and beyond. They also admired the business tactic of partnering with private individuals to develop the communities at Hutchinson, Kinsley, Dodge City, and elsewhere. A more cynical appraisal of Santa Fe strategies might term them desperate rather than benevolent. Decision makers for the Santa Fe were tempted by two lucrative alternatives—the cattle trade and land development—but could not pursue either in a well-planned, thorough manner. Sharing the promotion of even favored com-

munities such as Dodge City was a compromise they could not avoid.

If one poses the question of which Santa Fe enterprise came closest to a classic company town, the best case, perhaps, can be made not for a site in central or western Kansas, but for Osage City, only thirty-four miles from Topeka. The coal there was important to the early railroad, and the company not only developed the community on its own, it also did so with considerable care and concern for quality. As for an equivalent candidate along the Union Pacific, the only possible choice is Ellis. Brookville and Wallace have never been more than hamlets, while Wilson, nee Bosland, owes its growth to the recruitment efforts of Czech entrepreneur, Francis Swehla, who came to this area in 1874, several years after the railroad had abandoned its hopes for a cattle town. Ellis, which maintained its status as a division point until the end of the steam locomotive in 1948, once contained three office buildings plus a hotel, all built by the railroad company, as well as a sizable set of machine shops and a roundhouse. Although never able to compete for retail trade with Hays, thirteen miles to the east, it was about as single purpose a town as could be imagined. To this day its high school athletes still call themselves the railroaders.[44]

43. Waters, *Steel Trails to Santa Fe*, 156; Agnesa Reeve, *Constant Frontier: The Continuing History of Finney County, Kansas* (Garden City, Kans.: Finney County Historical Society, 1996), 11, 14. The community of Sherlock was later renamed Holcomb.

44. Francis J. Swehla, "Bohemians in Central Kansas," *Kansas Historical Collections, 1913-1914* 13 (1915): 469–512; *Ellis Review*, August 6, 1970.